

BEACH PROJECT CAUSING HEADACHES

Group warns of replenishment's impact

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SHIP BOTTOM — A grass-roots environmental group is asking municipal leaders to meet with them to discuss the dangers of the upcoming beach-replenishment project.

The Surfrider Foundation made its request at the Jan. 27 Borough Council meeting.

"We are not against beach replenishment. We are against the impact that it will have on recreation," said John Weber, a representative of the Surfrider Foundation. "You guys are the first to be part of the project, so you are the guinea pigs."

"We are more than willing to listen to what you have to say, but it's going to be hard to change the thinking of the (state and federal) government," said Mayor William Huelsenbeck.

No date has been set for the meeting.

"A project similar to this was done in Monmouth County," Weber said. "The beaches have never been the same. There are issues with the water drop."

Weber said the project could severely affect surfing, other types of recreation and businesses on Long Beach Island, as it did in Monmouth County.

"Tourism is a huge part of the economy and we do not want to see that affected and that could happen under this plan," Weber said. "We are trying to prevent that from happening."

Weber's concerns about the project include the dropoff from the shoreline that could result, the impact on surfing conditions and the impact on fishing in the area.

The group hopes to meet with representatives from other island municipalities, too.

The Surfrider Foundation works to protect oceans, waves and beaches, according to its Web site.

Founded in 1984, the Surfrider Foundation's most important coastal environmental work is carried out by its 60 chapters along the East, West, Gulf, Hawaiian and Puerto Rican coasts.

The proposed beach project includes the construction of a 125-foot-wide beach berm and a sand dune 30 feet wide; 347 acres of planted dune grass; and 540,000 feet of sand fencing.

It also will: raise the beach 8 feet above sea level and dunes another 14 feet for a total height of 22 feet; replace 7.4 million cubic yards of sand fill during initial construction; and provide maintenance work about every seven years over a 50-year period.

Huelsenbeck said he understands the group's concerns. "It's taken a lot of meetings to make sure this project can be done," he said, however, "we want to make sure that we don't lose the project."

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